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## THE FIRST GREAT CHRISTIAN CREED: A FURTHER WORD

In view of the able and penetrating remarks of my learned friend, Professor Francis A. Christie, on my article in the January (1910) number of *The American Journal of Theology* I would say: (1) I was not unaware of the fact that between Arianism and Athanasianism modern Unitarians preferred the latter (see Hedge, *Ways of the Spirit* [Boston, 1877], 74-78; Allen, *Christian Hist.*, Vol. I [1882; 3d ed., 1889], 119-21; Chadwick, *Old and New Unitarian Belief* [Boston, 1894], 147-48). (2) We all believe in the Fatherhood of God, but after all, men are men and God is God, and the modern Unitarian breaking with the old attempts to be true to some sense of the divine mystery and majesty of Christ does not help us much, because it shuts us off at a stroke from the religious experience of the past. That experience certainly voiced itself in the doctrine of the deity of Christ. "There were certain elements in Christian experience," says Principal James Drummond in his Hibbert Lectures for 1894 (*Via, Veritas, Vita*, p. 203), "which when taken up and interpreted by Greek philosophy, necessarily resulted in this doctrine; and though we may believe that the form and terminology of the doctrine were derived from a foreign source, we may nevertheless admit the reality of the fundamental Christian facts which imparted to it all its religious vitality." (3) The Logos idea was not simply and only a philosophical conception, but a conception involved in the Christian faith, as given in its documents and its life, but with philosophical antecedents and echoes. (4) I could not at all admit that the faith in the absolute deity of Jesus was not fundamental with such men as Bernard, Luther, Edwards, Wesley. He was the life of their life. Not that they needed in their preaching or writing to be always talking about his deity or explaining it, but both their experience and their work rested upon it. This does not mean that they stood for any special metaphysical interpretation or phraseology, but only for the fact as guarded at Nicaea. The reader will recall that bold challenge of Calvin in the assembly in the St. Francis Church in Lausanne on May 11, 1537 against Caroli, who had accused him and his preachers of being loose in the doctrine of the Trinity, and who would not be convinced of their soundness until they should sign the Three Creeds.

The preachers [says E. Stähelin] refused most decidedly to do this, not that they rejected these creeds in themselves, but, first, because Caroli had thus intended to bring their faith under suspicion and get the appearance of victory over them, and, second, because they would not by their example bring in such a tyranny in the Church that one would pass as a heretic who declined only to speak with the words, or according to the pleasure, of another. And when

Caroli still insisted that in the symbol of Athanasius [the falsely-called Athanasian Creed] it read that he who would be saved must think of the matter thus, Calvin did not hesitate to declare that this itself is a reason why he would not sign that creed. He and his friends had sworn to faith in one God, and not to the faith of this presumed Athanasius, whose sentences a true Christian Church would never have assented to (*Johannes Calvin*, Elberf. 1863, I, 137).

The words of Wesley are well known where he refused faith in the *manner* or theory of the Trinity and Incarnation, and holds only to the fact (London ed. of his *Works*, VI, 204). Nor would he limit sincere piety to believers even in that minimum (XIV, 293). But the "knowledge of the Three-One God," he says, "is interwoven with all true Christian faith, with all vital religion" (VI, 205). (5) Unless we set aside a good deal of the New Testament by subjective criticism—as is becoming the fashion now—the substance of the doctrine of the Trinity is in both the Synoptic Gospels and the Pauline epistles. If I remember rightly, that was acknowledged a few years ago by Rev. O. B. Frothingham and Rev. Dr. George E. Ellis; and on account of the pressure of that fact, the former, I think, gave up his ministry. (6) As to the religious value of the absolute divinity of Jesus as established at Nicaea, which in my judgment historically and humanly preserved Christianity as a saving power, I had no thought of the eucharist or of coercion. Magical theories of the former and the latter were only incidentally related to the matter. The devoutest Quaker could be the most enthusiastic Athanasian. In fact, he could present a pretty strong argument that our consciousness of the fulness of the divine power, peace, and victory over sin which we have by faith in Jesus logically cuts up by the roots all high sacramental doctrine. And as to persecution, that, alas! was in the politico-ecclesiastical relations of the times, in which all parties were implicated.

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#### CHRISTIAN EDUCATION IN INDIA<sup>1</sup>

The Editors of the *American Journal of Theology* have kindly sent me a proof of Professor Burton's article in the April issue on "The Status of Christian Education in India," and have asked me, as one who has had experience of the subject with which his paper deals, to make such remarks

<sup>1</sup> Editorial Note.—The editors of the *American Journal of Theology*, mindful of the possibility that views of educational conditions in India based mainly on a brief